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potency and irresistible character of the popular demand for the reelection of GROVER CLEVELAND.

Committee Rule in Congress.

We printed last week a letter from Washington in which the Hon. AMOS J. CUMMINGS, a member of Congress, raised a question of great public moment which long ago should have been brought home to the people by discussion in the press. On the face of it, this letter purported only to explain the committee system of the House of Representatives and its effect upon the methods of transacting public business. Beneath the lucid exposition of the existing state of things in the popular chamber could be distinctly read the query, Is the House of Representatives, under its present rules of procedure, what the framers of our Constitution intended it to be, or is it even what the men who elect the Congressmen suppose it to be now? Has there been, in other words, a wide departure from the purpose of the fathers and the early customs of the House, and is something in the nature of deception practised on the people by the virtual strangulation of their representatives? Behind all such inquiries, moreover, looms the fundamental question, Is the committee system an inevitable outgrowth of the existing conditions, upon which, notwithstanding undeniable defects, it is impossible to suggest a material improvement?

These are large questions, all of which cannot, of course, be exhaustively considered at this time. But we can at least raise and examine some of them. For example, did our Constitution makers expect that an individual Congressman would possess less capacity of initiative, less power of promptly and effectively advocating the wishes of his constituents (within the limits of Federal legislation), than was exercised by a member of the British Parliament? That they had no such intention is plain from the reports of the framers of the Federal Constitution, and of the proceedings of the House of Representatives during the first thirty years of its existence. In the Senate, and in the United States Supreme Court were raised the bulwarks against possible encroachment by the Federal popular assembly on the reserved rights of the States. Limitations of legislative competence, not limitations of individual activity, were imposed by the devisers of our organic law on the members of the lower House. That body, it was supposed, would constitute the bulwark and most energetic means of debate; its chief officers would stand forth as the authentic interpreters of the people's latest will, and for that reason exercise preponderant influence over the cast of measures and, indirectly, over the choice of administrative officials.

How widespread was the conviction that the popular assembly of the power of the republic would necessarily gravitate, and that the representatives of the people, in the exercise of their individual activity, were imposed by the devisers of our organic law on the members of the lower House. That body, it was supposed, would constitute the bulwark and most energetic means of debate; its chief officers would stand forth as the authentic interpreters of the people's latest will, and for that reason exercise preponderant influence over the cast of measures and, indirectly, over the choice of administrative officials.

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vived the purpose for which it was fashioned, the rigor of its monopoly is unimpaired to-day. But it will be asked, whatever its origin, may not the continuance of the system be justified on the score of public usefulness, on the ground that with its growth of the republic it has become indispensable to the despatch of the vast volume of business? That is a question which we will look at hereafter.

Our Admirable Fire Department.

The management of the recent great fire in this city reflects the highest credit on our Fire Department. It proves anew that New York has an organization for dealing with fires which has no superior, if, indeed, it has an equal in any other of the great communities of the world.

In discipline and the prompt and intelligent use of the modern appliances for saving property from destruction by fire, it is far ahead of the Fire Brigade of London, for instance, as was shown very conspicuously on the occasion of the burning, not long ago, of WHITELLY'S famous Universal Provider stores in the English metropolis. Though substantially the whole force of the brigade was constantly employed in that fire, it was as slow in getting to work and so bunglingly handled that the flames had got beyond its control before it was ready to put its means for extinguishing them to effective use.

Practically the fire seems to have died out of itself, the only notable service having been rendered by American scaling ladders, which were finally brought into employment to check the spread of the flames. As a consequence of the inefficiency of the Fire Brigade on that occasion, measures for the improvement of the organization and direction were demanded by the London newspapers, and a movement in that direction, we believe, has since been made.

The recent fire in Broadway might easily, with less intelligence and energy, have done us much more harm than it did. But, as it was, the destruction was confined within a single block, and to a few buildings. The first fire engines were on the spot in two minutes after the alarm was sounded from the signal station, and soon 300 disciplined firemen and twenty-four engines, with other appliances, from all parts of the town, were on hand to aid in the work of extinguishing the flames and saving the adjoining structures from injury.

It was a beautiful exhibition of discipline and efficiency, every man in his proper place, and proceeding with his appointed work calmly and determinedly. The best trained officers could not have brought a perfectly drilled regiment of soldiers into action more skillfully and to better advantage. The attack on such a fire, made in such a way, calls out, too, the same qualities of courage and self-possession which test the value of soldiers and their leaders, and it makes necessary the discipline and the quick adaptation of means to ends that warfare requires.

It might be too much to say that, with a Fire Department so admirably constituted and organized, New York is in no danger of great conflagrations like those which have occurred in Boston and Chicago, but we can reasonably declare that it is not probable that they will occur here. Therefore, fire insurance companies can take risks on New York with more confidence than in any other of the large towns of the Union.

In Reply to Mr. Everts.

At the Lincoln dinner on Saturday night the Hon. WILLIAM M. EVERTS was indiscreet enough to ask this question: "Have we [that is, the Republican party] anything to explain away?" Nobody answered the question, and Mr. EVERTS didn't try to answer it himself, but went on to try to explain it.

These things need to be explained away, but they cannot be explained away. Mr. EVERTS should avoid direct questions.

He Says the Volunteer was Irish.

A highly sensational statement comes from the Irish press, on whose coasts recently the Irish boatmen have been making a syndicate of Irishmen show whether a syndicate of Irishmen should build a boat to try again for the America's cup. A correspondent signing himself "Notwin," in a letter upon this question published in the Dublin *Spectator*, says this:

"And now, reader, don't burst into hysterical laughter when I make the assertion that the model from which the Volunteer was built was by a well-known Dublin yacht captain. I have seen a letter from a lady in Boston who brought the model in question with her, and was subsequently sold by a gentleman in Mr. Bismarck's employment to lead it. After the Volunteer was completed, several saw the model and the resemblance to the Volunteer was so striking that they were fully substantiated my statement, and with permission, give the names of the parties concerned."

Hurroo! Bring on your names before you take the Volunteer. That lovely boat a child of Erin! Who would have thought it?

Another interesting statement by our friend "Notwin," in the same letter, is that "if WILLIAM O'NEILL, MR. JAMISON'S [the Irish] Captain, had been on board the [the Volunteer] the result would have been different."

ning toward the dress; and this specimen should make the judicious wish that it might soon cease to exist altogether.

No other public man would have dared to go before the people with the *Times* starting him on such a subject as this, year without end to so many. Mr. BLAINE's withdrawal was the way for the *Times* to get a full and complete view of the man, and possibly even without discussion, unless with a view to giving some members an opportunity to pay a compliment like that which was so pleasantly introduced by Gen. Wheeler recently, when he presented to the House the report of the Board of Visitors for the past year, which was a graduate of West Point, a soldier of renown, and qualified to discuss with professional intelligence the important subject matter of the report, which is that of military science and education. Nevertheless, representing no doubt the judgment of the Board of Visitors, the report was as well as his own, he committed the fortunes of the report exclusively to the weight it would carry as the utterances of Mr. Geo. W. 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